



Called Out Of Darkness into His Marvelous Light

An address for the Cosmic Mass ● 21st February 2010 ● Rev Max

*But you are a chosen race,
a royal priesthood,
a holy nation,
God's own people,
that you may declare the wonderful deeds
of him who called you out of darkness
into his marvelous light.
Once you were no people
but now you are God's people;
once you had not received mercy
but now you have received mercy.
1 Peter 2:9-10*

Something That Has Deeply Touched Me

Something happened some years ago that has deeply touched me.

A man came to do training with me.
He attended the training for five days.

What did he experience?
What did he learn?

He let me know many things.
First of all, he didn't make sense of what was happening.
It was strange to him.
He also liked being there.
He realised that his life could open out.
He could come out of isolation.
He could stop being violent.

He has attended many training events since that time.
He is doing effective work as a counsellor and coach.
The lives of many people have turned around,
many who have been called no-hopers,
many who have dropped out of school.

Now, as he looks back on his life he says:

*I didn't know these things existed,
I didn't know about feeling,
I was out of touch with myself.*

I tune in with him and I am sure you can also.
I look back over my shoulder and so do you.
You look back and see yourself.

You are able to recall moments when you were out of touch.
You thought you knew things,
you thought you were aware,
yet at the same time there were blind spots.

Opening To Unknown Fields

I am very glad to have known teachers and friends
who have influenced me to open up, to explore,
to entertain ideas that seemed insignificant.

Some taught me the value of interacting with folk I rejected.
They inspired me to learn things I knew nothing about.

I have in mind that each one of you knows about all of this.
You know people who have been blind to things around them,
and you yourself have sometimes been switched off.
You know also that you have explored unknown fields,
that somehow you have embraced the unfamiliar
and gained from it.

There is a song that has been frequently sung in recent years.
I know some folk who are tired of the song.
They say they have sung it too many times.
Yet it is a song that is still loved by many,
it moves them to tears,
it touches their soul,
awakening in them a thank you for life.

These are the opening words as originally written by John Newton:

*Amazing grace!
how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost,
but now am found,
Was blind,
but now I see.*

John Newton, the slave trader, had entered a new realm,
a realm previously unknown;
the blindness was now gone,
he had been overtaken by a glorious presence.

Now indeed the knowledge of Saint Peter echoed in his being:

*once you had not received mercy
but now you have received mercy.*

This was no fleeting experience.

This new found knowledge continued to echo in his being,
the sense of wonder and praise continued to grow,
and he was able to clearly declare to the world
the wonderful deeds of him
who had called him out of darkness
into his marvellous light.

There are many things in your life and mine that do not last.

There are many fleeting experiences,
experiences that are there and then they are gone.
Yet there is a life-changing impulse that does last.
There is something that keeps prompting you.
It never stops.
And it *will* not stop.

It won't stop until that day when you are entirely transformed,
until the final meaning of all your journeyings is fulfilled.

Keeping Your Heart Open

There are the big starts in life,
the life-giving experiences,
the moments when you feel you can go on forever,
when you think that nothing can ever stop you,
nothing can turn you aside
from fulfilling your dream.

Yet these big starts are tested.
Obstacles block your path.
At these moments your resources may seem very slim.
You cannot find anything to keep you afloat.

The obstacle might be a sense of isolation,
or an overwhelming sense of loneliness,
maybe helplessness,
or despair.

Whatever the obstacle is it will it will suddenly appear,
it will be right there on your doorstep,
and it will not arrive when it suits you,
it will arrive in its own time.

Will you be ready?
Will you be able to deal with the obstacle?
Will you be able to keep your heart open
and not box yourself in?

These are the critical moments.

These are the moments when trust is required,
when a life-giving vision is needed,
when you look for light to shine
in the midst of the darkness.

Many are able to make an affirmation.

One person says out loud the words of the great prophet:

*The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light.*

Another person softly sings to themselves these inspired words:

*When I fall, I will arise.
When I walk in darkness
the Lord will be a light to me.
When I fall I will arise.*

Today I am going to remind you of a vision.

It is the vision presented in the letter to the Hebrews.

It is a vision that has lifted the spirits of many.

It is as if each one of you is a downhill racer.

You are charging down snow covered slopes,
and as you ride the Vancouver hills
you become aware of the sound of the crowd.

It is a loud sound,
an exuberant sound.
The crowd cheers you on.

The truth is that you are indeed surrounded by a crowd.

It is a crowd that sees you,
that sees you living your life,
is aware of your actions
and your experiences.
This crowd is cheering you on.

Who is in this crowd?

What are their qualifications?

They are men and women who have been tested.
They continued on in the face of the obstacles.

*Some were tortured...Others suffered mocking and scourging,
and even chains and imprisonment.*

*They were stoned, they were sawn in two,
they were killed with the sword ...*

These are the men of faith,

These make up the crowd who sees you,
and cheers you on.

*Therefore, since we are surrounded
by so great a cloud of witnesses,
let us also lay aside every weight,
and sin which clings so closely,
and let us run with perseverance
the race that is set before us,
looking to Jesus*

*the pioneer and perfecter of our faith,
who for the joy that was set before him
endured the cross,
despising the shame,*

*and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God
(Hebrews 12:1-2)*

Let yourself be aware of this cloud of witnesses.

They are present with you.

No matter what your mind may tell you
they are still there,

and the awareness of their presence
will keep your heart open.

They surround you.

They see you when your resources have run out.

They continually cheer you on.

You are not alone.

To dare to take hold of this vision and to sustain it

builds into you the faith that Martin Luther knew.

He expressed that faith in the words of a song:

*My faith, it is an oaken staff
The traveller's well-loved aid,
My faith it is a weapon stout,
The soldier's trusty blade:
I'll travel on, and still be stirred
By silent thought or social word;
By all my perils undeterred,
A soldier-pilgrim staid.*

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